

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMCONSUL KARACHI
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMCONSUL LAHORE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 4693

1. SUMMARY: AN INTERVIEW WITH SOVIET AMBASSADOR
S. A. AZIMOV, APPEARING IN THE MAY 9-15 EDITION OF THE
CONSERVATIVE URDU WEEKLY AFRASIA, HAS CREATED A FLURRY OF
IRRITATION AND ANXIETY IN A PAKISTAN STILL IN SHOCK AFTER
LAST MONTH'S REVOLUTION IN NEIGHBORING AFGHANISTAN. THE

INTERVIEW, GIVEN BEFORE BUT PUBLICIZED AFTER THE RECENT
EVENTS IN KABUL, HAS BEEN DESCRIBED IN THE PRESS AS "OPEN

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INTERFERENCE IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF PAKISTAN."
THE GOP HAS COMPLAINED TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR AND THE SOVIET EMBASSY
HAS PUBLICLY LABELED THE PRESS ACCOUNT A "CONCOCTION."
END SUMMARY

2. AZIMOV MADE HIS BLUNT, UNDIPLOMATIC REMARKS AT A

SMALL DINNER PARTY IN MID-APRIL ATTENDED BY FOUR SOVIET

DIPLOMATS AND SIX JOURNALISTS, INCLUDING AFRASIA'S PUBLISHER, FORMER NAWA-I-WAQT CORRESPONDENT ABDUL QADIR HASAN. WHILE AFRASIA WAS THE ONLY PUBLICATION THAT ORIGINALLY CARRIED THE STORY, OTHER JOURNALISTS WHO WERE PRESENT AT THE DINNER HAVE SINCE WRITTEN ABOUT AZIMOV'S REMARKS AND CONFIRM THAT AZIMOV HAD, IN SUBSTANCE, MADE THE STATEMENTS THAT QADIR ATTRIBUTED TO HIM. THEY NOTE ALSO THAT AT THE END, WHEN ASKED IF HIS REMARKS WERE FOR PUBLICATION, AZIMOV REPORTEDLY SAID THEY WERE INTENDED FOR PAKISTANI EARS.

3. IN HIS REMARKS, AZIMOV ALLEGEDLY COMPLAINED THAT PAKISTAN IS FRIENDLY TO ANY ENEMIES OF THE SOVIET UNION AND IS AN ALIGNED NATION, UNLIKE ITS NEIGHBORS, INDIA AND AFGHANISTAN, WHICH DO NOT BELONG TO ANTI-SOVIET PACTS. HE PROTESTED AGAINST PAKISTAN'S SUPPORT OF SOMALIA AND WAS HIGHLY CRITICAL OF THE DIFFICULTIES THE GOP CREATED IN JANUARY BEFORE PERMITTING FOODSTUFFS INTENDED FOR SOVIET ADVISERS IN ETHIOPIA TO TRANSIT KARACHI. HE NOTED THAT IT TOOK BREZHNEV'S PERSONAL ASSURANCES TO SPRING THEM.

4. HE TERMED PUBLICATION OF EXCERPTS FROM ANWAR SADAT'S CONFIDENTIAL

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MEMOIRS IN THE PAK PRESS AN UNFRIENDLY ACT, AS IS PAKISTAN'S MEMBERSHIP IN THE RCD (WHICH HE REGARDED AS INDISTINGUISHABLE FROM CENTO). IN CONCLUSION, AZIMOV SAID THAT CONTINUATION OF PAKISTAN'S PRESENT FOREIGN POLICY -- INCLUDING CENTO MEMBERSHIP -- WILL MAKE IT VERY DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO CONTINUE AS THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR TO PAKISTAN.

5. THE INTERVIEW WAS PICKED UP AND GIVEN WIDE COVERAGE IN PAKISTAN'S URDU PRESS DURING THE LAST WEEK AND WAS CARRIED ON BBC'S WIDELY HEARD BROADCAST TO PAKISTAN. IN A LONG REBUTTAL TO AZIMOV'S CHARGES, IN THE MAY 9 EDITION OF NAWA-I-WAQT, DEPUTY EXECUTIVE EDITOR ARIF NIZAMI CLAIMS THAT IT IS THE SOVIET UNION WHICH HAS BEFRIENDED PAKISTAN'S ENEMIES AND ACCUSES THE SOVIETS OF COLLUSION IN THE 1971 BREAK-UP OF PAKISTAN. AZIMOV'S REMARKS, SAYS NIZAMI, HAVE ACHIEVED ADDITIONAL SIGNIFICANCE IN LIGHT OF RECENT EVENTS ACROSS THE BORDER, AND HE REQUESTED THE GOP TO DEMAND AN EXPLANATION FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR FOR HIS "FLAGRANT VIOLATION OF DIPLOMATIC NORMS AND PROTOCOL" (TEXT OF REBUTTAL BEING POUCHED).

6. ACCORDING TO OUR BRITISH COLLEAGUES, AZIMOV WAS

CALLED IN BY FOREIGN SECRETARY SHAHNAWAZ TO EXPLAIN HIS REMARKS. AZIMOV IS SAID TO HAVE ORIGINALLY DENIED HAVING MADE THE STATEMENTS ATTRIBUTED TO HIM; REPORTEDLY, HE THEN MINIMIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF HIS REMARKS SINCE THEY WERE NOT MADE IN A "REAL" INTERVIEW. IN AN OFFICIAL DENIAL, THE SOVIET EMBASSY HAS TERMED THE AFRASIA ARTICLE "PURE CONCOCTION" AND SAID THAT AMBASSADOR AZIMOV GAVE NO INTERVIEWS, HELD NO PRESS CONFERENCES, AND MADE NO STATEMENTS WHILE HE WAS IN LAHORE. IN A TACIT ADMISSION, THAT AFRASIA ARTICLE WAS NOT "PURE CONCOCTION," HOWEVER, THE DENIAL STATED THAT THE ARTICLE WAS "AN ATTEMPT TO TENDENTIOUSLY INTERPRET FRIENDLY TALKS THE USSR
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AMBASSADOR DID HAVE WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF PAKISTANI PUBLIC CIRCLES IN LAHORE."

7. COMMENT: UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES IN PAKISTAN -- WHATEVER THEY MAY BE -- THE SOVIT AMBASSADOR'S BLUNT REMARKS WOULD HAVE EARNED HIM AT MOST A LOT OF PAKISTANI IRRITATION. ALTHOUGH THE IMPORT OF THE REMARKS HAS BEEN MINIMIZED BY THE CMLA'S ADVISOR ON POLITICAL AFFAIRS MAULA BAHKSH SOOMRO, AND ALTHOUGH THE REMARKS THEMSELVES PRE-DATE THE AFGHAN REVOLUTION, THE IMPACT OF THE REMARKS ON AN ALREADY JITTERY PAKISTAN HAVE BEEN MAGNIFIED. MANY PAKISTANIS ARE FRANKLY ANXIOUS OVER THE COINCIDENCE OF THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR'S NEW TOUGH TALK, THE KABUL REVOLUTION, A STEP-UP IN PAKISTAN SOVIET PRESS ACTIVITIES, SOVIET MOVE IN THE HORN, AND INDIA'S PROMPT RECOGNITION OF THE NEW COMMUNIST RULERS OF KABUL. AND MANY PAKISANIS ARE BEGINNING TO BE FRIGHTENED OF WHAT THEY SEE.
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